

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5659

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDEV, PINS, WZ

SUBJECT: SWAZILAND TENTH ANNIVERSARY INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS

REF: MBABANE 2988

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE NERVOUS ATMOSPHERE, WEEK-LONG CELEBRATIONS OF SWAZILAND'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE ENDED SEPTEMBER 10 WITHOUT INCIDENT. KEY ADDRESSES OF PRIME MINISTER AND KING IN THIS PERIOD, AS WELL AS HEAVY POLICE AND MILITARY PRESENCE AT CENTRAL EVENTS, REVEALED HIGH-LEVEL CONCERN FOR INTERNAL SECURITY. HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT DETRACT FROM COLORFULNESS, PAGEANTRY, AND POMP OF THE OCCASION. RANKING VISITORS WERE QUEEN OF LESOTHO, PRESIDENT AND LADY KHAMA OF BOTSWANA, AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHISSANO OF MOZAMBIQUE. END SUMMARY.

2. CELEBRATIONS WERE SCHEDULED FROM SEPTEMBER 5 THROUGH 10. GUESTS INCLUDED THOSE NAMED PARA 1 ABOVE PLUS SPECIAL ENVOYS FROM UK, GRC, WEST GERMANY, ZAMBIA, KENYA, MALAWI, ZAIRE, AND EEC, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND REPS FROM THE 20-ODD NON-RESIDENT EMBASSIES ACCREDITED TO SWAZILAND.

3. FIRST EVENT WAS PRIME MINISTER'S MORNING GARDEN PARTY ON SEPTEMBER 5. SPEAKING EXTEMPORANEOUSLY (TEXT FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM) PRIME MINISTER CRITICIZED FOREIGN POWERS THAT SEEK TO IMPOSE THEIR PHILOSOPHIES ON AFRICA. BRINGING SUBJECT CLOSER TO HOME, HE WARNED

SWAZIS WHO SUCCUMBED TO THESE ALIEN WAYS OF THINKING THAT THEY HAD ONLY A SHORT TIME IN WHICH TO REPENT. HE CONCLUDED WITH AN UNUSUALLY STRONG (FOR HIM) BLAST AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, WHICH HE SUGGESTED WAS STILL WIDELY PRACTICED AGAINST BLACK SWAZIS.

4. MAIN EVENT OF THE WEEK WAS 6-HOUR STADIUM DISPLAY ON SEPTEMBER 6 DOMINATED BY TWO FEATURES: (A) MILITARY PARADES AND SALUTES, AND (B) TRADITIONAL CULTURE DANCING AND DRESS. MILITARY PROGRAM INCLUDED BANDS OF ARMY, POLICE, AND PRISON ORGANIZATIONS. THESE WERE FOLLOWED BY LONG COLUMNS OF UNIFORMED ARMY, RIOT POLICE, AND MEN AND WOMEN PRISON OFFICERS. THE REPETITIVE PERFORMANCE OF MARCHERS ACCOUNTED FOR PERHAPS ONE HALF OF THE STADIUM EVENTS. BY CONTRAST, THE TRADITIONAL DANCING (IN WHICH KING IN TRADITIONAL DRESS, CARRYING SHIELD AND SPEAR, PARTICIPATED FOR 20 MINUTES IN COMPANY OF SEVERAL THOUSAND WARRIOR-CLAD SWAZI MEN), GYMNASTICS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN, ETC, TOOK UP LESS THAN ONE HOUR OF THE SIX.

5. OTHER, LESS WELL-ATTENDED, EVENTS INCLUDED PRESIDENT KHAMA'S OFFICIAL OPENING OF HIGHWAY FROM BIG BEND TO HELEHELE, QUEEN MOSUMAHALI M'AMOHATO'S OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AT LOBAMBA, AND THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE AT THE STADIUM ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10.

6. THE ROLE ACCORDED THE MILITARY PERFORMERS, ESPECIALLY AT THE DAY-LONG STADIUM DISPLAY, TAKES ON SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE SINCE IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS ASSOCIATED IN PEOPLE'S MINDS AS SOMEHOW RELATED TO THE SWALIMO FLYER (REFTEL). WHILE THE FLYER IS ONLY THE LATEST SYMBOL OF THE QUESTIONING ATTITUDES AND OPPOSITION KNOWN TO EXIST, AND WHICH HAS SURFACED OCCASIONALLY IN THE PAST (E.G., OCTOBER 1977 STUDENT-TEACHER DEMONSTRATIONS), THE WAY IN WHICH THE GOS HANDLED THIS LATEST THREAT TURNED OUT TO BE A MAJOR POINT OF SUBSTANTIVE INTEREST TO ALL ASSEMBLED GUESTS. THE REASON IS THAT, BY ITS ACTIONS, THE GOS ITSELF MAGNIFIED THE OPPOSITION BY GIVING UNUSUAL PUBLIC ATTENTION TO IT. FREE GOS PUBLICITY TO THE OPPOSITION INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING: (A) FAILURE OF THE KING OR, IN SOME CASES, THE PRIME MINISTER TO ATTEND FUNCTIONS AS ANNOUNCED; (B) MILITARY PRESENCE AND HIGHLY VISIBLE SECURITY MEASURES, SUCH AS SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED STADIUM WATCHTOWERS MANNED BY BINOCULAR-BEARING AGENTS; (C) PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS AT THE SEPTEMBER 5 GARDEN PARTY; AND (D) THE KING'S STADIUM REMARKS THE NEXT DAY IN WHICH HE NOTED THAT EVERY COUNTRY HAS ITS "TROUBLE MAKERS WHO DISLIKE PEACE AND STABILITY" (TEXT FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM). ALL THESE ACTIONS HAD THE EFFECT OF CALLING ATTENTION TO SWALIMO, WHICH THEREBY ACQUIRED, IN THE OPINION OF MOST OBSERVERS, CONSIDERABLY MORE ATTENTION THAN IT DESERVED.

7. UNWITTINGLY BETRAYING HIS DEEP SENSE OF RELIEF AT ABSENCE OF PUBLIC DISTURBANCES LAST WEEK, PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED IN STATEMENT RELEASED SEPTEMBER 11 HIS "SINCERE APPRECIATION TO THE ENTIRE SWAZI NATION FOR THEIR EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOR DURING THE TENTH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS." HE SAID THAT "ALL THE DIFFERENT NATIONS THAT CAME TO JOIN US IN OUR CELEBRATIONS WERE HIGHLY IMPRESSED WITH THE RESPECT AND LHE ORDERLY BEHAVIOR THAT YOU DISPLAYED AS A NATION."

8. COMMENT: THE FACT THAT CEREMONIES WERE UNEVENTFUL TENDS, AS NOTED REFTEL, TO PROVE THAT GOS IS IN FULL CONTROL. REGRETTABLY, GOS RESPONSE TO THIS MINOR MANIFESTATION OF OPPOSITION HAS BEEN (A) TO PUBLICIZE AND THEREBY MAGNIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPPOSITION, AND (B) TO TAKE SELF-RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE OF DISMISSING ALL COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES (SOME OF THEM LEGITIMATE), WHICH HAS THE NET EFFECT OFSTRENGTHENING THE VERY OPPOSITION THEY ARE TRYING TO CURB. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST, AND IN THE INTERESTS OF GOS STABILITY, TO ENCOURAGE GOS TO ASSESS THE CRITICISMS AND COMPLAINTS USING CRITERIA OF JUSTICE, STABILITY, AND DEMOCRATIC EXPRESSION. IT WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK. WACHOB

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